

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 04336 051157Z

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DPW-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 051026Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4800

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 4336

FOL TEL SENT ACTION SAIGON FM BIEN HOA 4 APR 75:

QUOTE BIEN HOA 264

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJ: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR3

1. THIS MESSAGE IS BASED ON A CONVERSATION WITH THE MR3 CHIEF OF STAFF, BG THONG, AT 0930 HOURS APRIL 4. EXCEPT FOR MILITARY STRAGGLER PROBLEMS, THE SITUATION MILITARILY IS GENERALLY QUIET THROUGHOUT MR3.

2. THE 318TH ARMORED TASK FORCE OPERATING ON A SWEEP IN SOUTH-EASTER TAY NINH PROVINCE HAD LIGHT CONTACTS APRIL 3 WITH LOCAL FORCES AND THERE WERE LIGHT CONTACTS ALSO ALONG ROUTE 1 IN LONG KHANH AND BINH TUY PROVINCES. THERE IS NO CURRXNT HEAVY NVA PRESSURE ON ANY FRONT.

3. MILITARY STRAGGLER PROBLEMS CENTER FOR THE MOMENT IN BINH TUY PROVINCE, IN VUNG TAU, AND ON THE VUNG RAU--BIEN HOA (LONG BINH)--SAIGON HIGHWAY. THE VUNG TAU-SAIGON HIGHWAY PROBLEMS APPEAR TO BE IN HAND FOR THE MOMENT BUT THERE ARE PROBLEMS IN BINH TUY.

(A) BINH TUY. MOST OF A CONVOY WHICH HAD BEEN SHUTTLECOCKED
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 04336 051157Z

DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS BETWEEN BINH TUY AND BINH THUAN PROV-

INCES FINALLY CAME THROUGH BOTH NVA/VC AND GVN BLOCKS APRIL RJZZ BRINGING THOUSANDS OF MILITARY STRAGGLERS INTO THE HAM TAN AREA. GVN AUTHORITIES IN HAM TAN SUCCEEDED IN DISARMING ABOUT HALF OF THE ESTIMATED THREE TO FIVE THOUSAND TROOPS WHO THUS ARRIVED, BUT THE OTHER HALF REFUSED TO GIVE UP THEIR ARMS AND HAVE CREATED PROBLEMS. (SOME 3,000 TROOPS OF THE 2ND ARVN DIV, WHICH ARRIVED IN HAM TAN SEVERAL DAYS AGO, WERE ALL DISARMED PREVIOUSLY AND FOR THE MOMENT REMAIN UNDER CONTROL). YESTERDAY THE NEWLY ARRIVED STRAGGLERS ROBBED A BANK IN HAM TAN, TOOK OVER THE ESSO GASOLINE SERVICE STATION, DRAWING OFF ALL OF ITS GASOLINE SUPPLY, AND OTHERWISE WERE LOOTING, SHOOTING, AND RESISTING ARREST IN A DOWNTOWN QUARTER OF HAM TAN AS WELL AS AT THE PORT WHERE THEY WERE COMMANDEERING BOATS. ONE SUCH BOAT SANK APRIL 3 AS IT PULLED AWAY FROM THE SHORE AFTER SOME SHOOTING HAD OCCURRED. OUR BINH TUY PROV REP ACCOMPANIED MR3 OFFICERS DEALING WITH REFUGEE PROBLEMS TO HAM TAN ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 4 AND FOUND CONDITIONS OF CONSIDERABLE BUT NOT COMPLETE DISORDER. THE PROVINCE CHIEF IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT HIS SITUATION BUT SAID HE HOPES TO BE ABLE TO RE-ESTABLISH COMPLETE CONTROL -- PERHAPS IN TWO OR THREE DAYS. THE PROBLEM WILL BE FURTHER WEIGHTED, HOWEVER, BY A LINE OF TRUCKS REPORTEDLY EXTENDING FROM BINH TUY PROVINCE SCORES OF KMS BACK INTO MR2 LOADED WITH MANY THOUSANDS MORE SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS. ALL OF THESE MILITARY AND CIVILIAN REFUGEES ARE TRYING TO REACH SAIGON VIA HAM TAN AND VUNG TAU. REFUGEE ASSISTANCE EFFORTS IN THE HAM TAN AREA -- SHIPS STANDING OFF HAM TAN PORT, FOR EXAMPLE -- ARE BLOCKED PENDING THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER. MR3 HQS IS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING ADDITIONAL FORCES TO ASSIST IN THE RESTORATION OF ORDER

(B) VUNG TAU. THE MARINE DIV COMMANDER, GEN LAN, HAS BEEN APPOINTED MILITARY COMMANDER FOR VUNG TAU AND AT LAST REPORT THIS MORNING THE CITY WAS STABLE AND ORDERLY AS IT CONTINUES TO RECEIVE THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FROM THE NORTH. OUR REPORTS ARE THAT 15,000 ARRIVED BY BOAT ON APRIL 3 ALONE AND AT THE MOMENT THERE SEEMS TO BE NO END TO THE STREAM OF BOATS HEADED THERE. THE JOURNEY BY BOAT FROM HAM TAN IS ABOUT SEVEN HOURS. THE 4,000 MARINES WHO ARRIVED IN VUNG TAU APRIL 2 ARE DISARMED, IN CAMP, AND ORDERLY AT LAST REPORT. ONE REPORT WE HAVE NOT VERIFIED IS THAT ANOTHER 30,000 MILITARY STRAGGLERS HAVE THUS FAR ARRIVED AND ARE BEING ACCOMMODATED IN A SEPARATE CAMP, WHERE SOME RE-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAIGON 04336 051157Z

PORTS SAY THE 22ND ARVN DIV IS BEING RE-FORMED. OUR PROV REP FOR PHUOC TUY PROVINCE IN BA RIA WAS TOLD BY TELEPHONE BY RELIABLE AUTHORITY IN THE LATE MORNING OF APRIL 4 THAT THE DISARMING OF SOLDIERS AS THEY ARRIVE IS GOING SMOOTHLY AT VUNG TAU AND THAT FOR THE PRESENT THE SITUATION IS IN HAND.

(C) VUNG TAU-BIEN HOA (LONG BINH)-SAIGON HIGHWAY. DURING THE PAST THREE DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW SHOOTING AND ARMED ROBBERY

INCIDENTS ON THE ROAD IN ALL THREE PROVINCES CONCERNED - PHUOC TUY, BIEN HOA, AND GIA DINH. ON APRIL 3 A CHECK POINT WAS ESTABLISHED IN BIEN HOA PROVINCE AT WHICH MILITARY STRAGGLERS WERE COLLECTED FROM BUSES OR TRUCKS, DISARMED, AND GIVEN TRANSPORT MPV SERVICE (MARINE, AIRBORNE, RANGER, ARMY, ETC) CAMPS IN THIS AREA. THIS CHECK POINT OPERATION WAS STILL GOING WELL ON APRIL 4. A POTENTIAL PROBLEM HAS ARISEN, HOWEVER, AT AN LOI CAMP BETWEEN LONG THANH DISTRICT TOWN AND LONG BINH. THIS SITE HAS BEEN DESIGNATED FOR THE RECEIPT OF 60,000 CIVILIAN REFUGEES BUT HAS ALREADY BEEN OCCUPIED BY ARMED RANGERS AND AIRBORNE FROM MRS 1 AND 2 WITH FAMILIES, GIVING A TOTAL OF SOME 5,000 NOW IN THE CAMP. THE ARMED RANGERS AND AIRBORNE ARE REFUSING TO ALLOW CIVILIAN REFUGEES TO ENTER THE SITE, OR EVEN TO MOVE INTO UNOCCUPIED LAND ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE SITE. BIEN HOA PROVINCE IS WEIGHING WHAT FURTHER STEPS TO TAKE AT THIS STAGE WITH THIS PROBLEM SOME 20 KMS SOUTHEAST OF BIEN HOA CITY ON HIGHWAY 15.

PETERS. UNQUOTE.

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